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USDA Under Secretary to Visit Farmers Markets in Virginia

FREDERICKSBURG, VA, July 10, 2012 – USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Ed Avalos will visit two farmers markets in Fredericksburg, Virginia on Saturday, July 14, to see the impact of federal grant funds in the local community. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) provides important support for these markets through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the Farmers Market Promotion Program, which is distributed in partnership with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Fredericksburg area farmers markets received \$30,000 in grant funds in 2011 to increase fresh food access and sales of fruits and vegetables to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) clients. Since the inception of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Virginia has received over \$1.9 million in grant funds to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Through the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Fredericksburg area farmers markets received \$88,400 in grant funds in 2011 to encourage SNAP recipients and credit card users to shop at farmers markets through educational programs that encourage the consumption of locally grown foods. Since the inception of the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Virginia has received over \$997,000 in grant funds to help improve and expand domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agri-tourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. By the end of 2011, fifty-three farmers markets or direct-marketing farmers in Virginia had been approved to accept SNAP benefits as payment for their products. In 2011 alone, nearly \$670,000 in federal nutrition program benefits were designated for farmers market purchases, an important boost to the local economy.

Under Secretary Avalos will visit the Spotsylvania Farmers Market and Fredericksburg Farmers Market to highlight success stories that demonstrate effective use of USDA grant funds in building local communities and increasing access to fresh, nutritious foods.

WHO: Agriculture Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Ed Avalos

WHAT: USDA Under Secretary Ed Avalos visits Farmers Markets in Virginia

WHEN: Saturday, July 14, 2012
Spotsylvania Farmers Market: 9:30 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.
Fredericksburg Farmers Market: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

WHERE: Spotsylvania Farmers Market
12150 Gordon Rd, Fredericksburg, VA 22407

Fredericksburg Farmers Market
Hurkamp Park, Prince Edward Street, Fredericksburg, VA 22401

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